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preserved in their entirety except the *Waythandaya*, and even that is extant with only two scenes missing, while respecting the lost scenes themselves some accounts are preserved. His works have been also studied widely and editorial prefaces to his works offer adequate accounts of his life and writings. Moreover, many courtiers of U Pon Nya's time are still living, and from them first-hand accounts have been obtained by scholars of the present day. After all, U Pon Nya's period is very recent.[1]

For the decadent period, 1878 to 1886, I was dependent on oral accounts of the plays until I went to England. Printing came into general use in Burma during this period and very great numbers of plays were printed. From the Government register of published books we learn that as many as three or four editions of 5,000 copies each of the more famous plays of the period were sold out a few weeks after publication. Yet search as I might, I could not find any copies of the plays in Burma. I discovered later that every one of the more famous plays, with about a hundred less-known plays of the period, are happily preserved in the British Museum. Incidentally, I found that the oral accounts regarding them were correct.

References to historical events and to non-dramatic works made in the thesis are taken from standard works.

As regards my dependence on oral tradition, there is this to be said. The oral accounts of a less civilized nation may be more imaginative than accurate, but with the Burmese everything points to the reliability of the tradition. After all, it goes back to only about two hundred years, and the intervening period is not so long as to undermine human memory. Moreover, as I have said, the truth of the tradition can be ascertained from other sources. It should be remembered that in a country where printing was not in general use until about 1860, and records and literary works were written on palm-leaf and parchment, both of which are very liable to destruction by

[1] My chief informants for the period are:

1. Myothawundauk-kadaw, wife of the Myothawundauk, who distinguished himself in the defence of the palace during the Myingun Rebellion mentioned in the chapter on U Pon Nya. She was a lady-in-waiting at court during the last two reigns.

2. My mother's elder brother. My maternal grandfather was Naymyo Thiri Kyawhtin Nawyahta, Minister for Revenue at Minhla, and an 'honorary poet to the court' in the last two reigns.

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fire, damp, or during a war, it is natural that original documents and records should not exist in great number. As this is the first attempt to study Burmese drama as a whole and from a modern critical standpoint, I am on virgin soil. My hope is that better scholars will consider critically the results which I have reached in necessary dependence upon tradition, and that when all has been reconsidered and much has been rejected, the residue may be accepted as a contribution to knowledge.

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668 178 536* [213] [177] for scholars to rehandle it. The introduction of cheap printing in Lower Burma was of the utmost importance to the drama. Printing had been known to the Burmese long before the British administered Lower Burma, but it was an expensive and laborious affair. The British introduced cheap and efficient printing presses, worked by cheap but skilled Indian labour. Once the stage of transition had been completed and economic prosperity had returned, printing spread all over Lower Burma and widened the circle of admirers of the drama, encouraged the study of the great plays in their original form as distinct from the modified versions of the professional actors, and created a public eager not only to see but also to read plays. As a result of these various causes scholars began writing plays again after 1875, but their efforts were not very successful until Saya Yaw in 1877 wrote and produced his *History of Thaton*.

2. *The History of Thaton*

536* Saya Yaw's story is remarkably original. In order that the question of succession should be settled beforehand, the young king of Thaton is advised by his ministers to take a consort without delay, and he promises to consider the matter. In the next scene, a brother and sister, belonging to a semi-civilized tribe on a neighbouring mountain, are entering the city to seek employment, for they have been starving since the death of their parents. The scene shifts to the centre of the city, where a rich nobleman and his wife are quarrelling and blaming each other, because they have no children to inherit their wealth. The characters are comic, and the scene is humorous. As they stand shouting at each other, the brother and sister pass by, and they are struck by the girl's beauty and the young man's nobility of bearing. When they discover that the strangers are without parents and are looking for employment, they, in great [563] joy, adopt them as son and daughter. In the next scene, merchants from the Shan hills arrive at the city, singing and dancing their own songs and dances. They soon dispose of their wares, and they are making preparations to leave when the brother arrives. He becomes friendly with the merchants, and after listening to their tales of romance and adventure in their hills, he decides to accompany them to their home. He asks permission to go from his foster-parents and his sister, who reluctantly let him go. The foster-parents cry, and the brother and sister bid farewell to each other in songs of great tenderness. In the next scene, the chieftain of a Shan state is sorely

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346 *kambawd*. The laity assembled outside the precincts let off rockets and guns
796 in celebration of the event. Finally, the ceremony of *yaditcha*, the pouring
778 of water (No. 100), is performed by the grantor of the site—as at every other

48. ILLUMINATED KAMBAWA.

religious dedication—to signify that the property has been dedicated for ever. The precincts of the *thein* are marked by low boundary pillars, mostly of Sagáing marble, set in the trench, which is then filled in. A different form of *thein* is the *ye-thein*, which is built over the water to effect its isolation.

792 Although the *yahán*, as already stated, may not ask for anything, he may
735 decline what is offered. He signifies this by inverting his *thabít* (*thabeit-kmauk*). The action has become a symbol for excommunication. The *yahán* might assemble in the *thein* and perform *thabít-kmauk* against a layman for heinous wickedness. His house would be passed by in collecting *sun* and all offerings tendered by him refused. The practice has become obsolete; it is said to have no warrant in the scriptures, and to be contrary to their spirit.

47. SUN SENT BY THE KYAÛNGTARA.

Where the people are very prosperous and the *yahán* are not many, the collecting of *sun* in the streets has sunk to a formality observed by the novices only, who on return to the monastery empty their *thabít* to the dogs. But in other circumstances the sojourner *yahán*, novices and scholars live on the *sun*. An ordinance of the Buddha dispenses the *yahán* from collecting his food from house to house if there be pious people who proffer him his sustenance at his abode. The founder of the monastery (*Kyaung-tagá*), who nomin-

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still is used by the Shans for their sacred MSS. The Burmans use the paper chiefly in the form of stiff tablets (*parabèik*), blackened, like the *thimbôn*, for writing on with a steatite pencil. Burmese type was cut (No. 452) and the first printing-plant set up in Burma by the American Baptist Mission. At present

274. PALM-LEAF MS.

there are a number of printing establishments owned by Burmans, from which quite a literature of their religious works has issued. At first the Buddhists of Burma considered print not good enough for the scripture canon. Modernised legends of the Buddha in his previous incarnations (*zat*) are beginning to form the foundation of a romance-literature of indigenous type. Newspapers have not yet taken a firm hold, even in the large towns; but news travels very fast in the ordinary way, especially news about the prices of goods. This western art has not contributed to the spread of western knowledge in the way that might be expected. The Yaw Mindyi, a minister of the late King Mindôn Min, made a most praiseworthy effort to popularise western ideas in a series of MS. treatises. A native undertaking upon a grand scale—nothing less than a Burmese encyclopædia—was on foot in the sixties, but fell through for want of organised support. In Japan, an analogous enterprise was successful. What applies to concerted action in matters like the above, applies equally to political combination. Few Burmans, even after years of schooling, learn enough to read an English newspaper with profit. To this day there is no Burmese manual for the study of English. The scholars learn only enough of the language to procure them employment as accountants and copyists. Similarly, there are few English who can understand a Burmese newspaper.

272. COPYIST AT WORK.

Dealers, with the exception of the